



Don't Have a Litter - Spay Your Critter

Project #
FY16-108

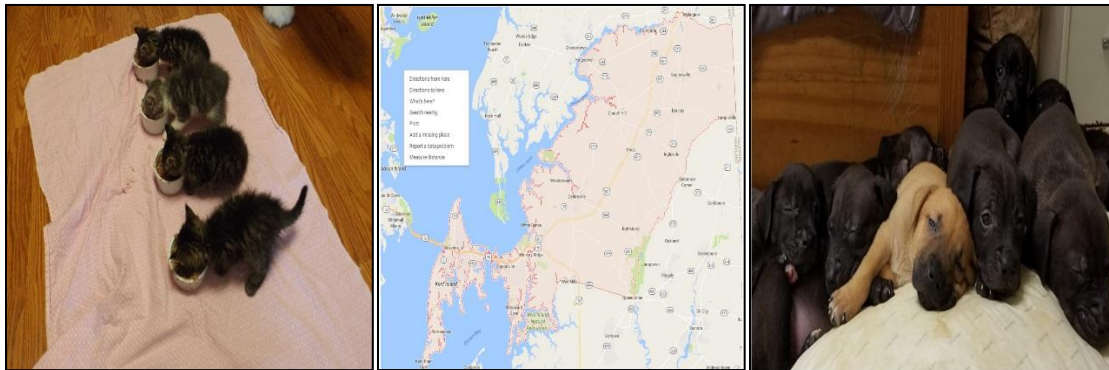
County: Queen Anne's County

Number of Cats Spayed:	56	Number of Dogs Spayed:	21
Number of Cats Neutered:	41	Number of Dogs Neutered:	25

Amount Received: \$11,250.00	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$4.87
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Project Synopsis:

This project targeted low income families in seven zip codes of the county to offer spay/neuter services that they otherwise might not be able to afford. Zip codes were selected based on demographics associated with race and income, with a special focus on Hispanic communities.



Project Description:

The purpose of the grant was to offer free spay/neuter services to low income families and to develop an educational campaign aimed at those county residents that may not understand the value of spay/neuter procedures due to cultural or language hurdles. The goal of this grant would be to educate and advocate for county residents to get their pets altered, and be able to offer the means for people to do so if they cannot afford it. The Animal Welfare League of Queen Anne's County (AWLQAC) entered into a public-private partnership with the Queen Anne's County (QAC) government in September 2013. AWL is responsible for all domestic animal care for the county and is the only open-admission shelter in the county.

Period of performance 9.1.2015 to 7.1.2016 (became 1.1.16 to 12.31.16)

AWL identified seven zip codes areas of QAC where there was a higher concentration of low-income and minority residents. While the program was marketed throughout the county, these areas were particularly targeted because census and other data indicated these were concentrated populations that were struggling financially and/or may have language barriers preventing families from spaying/neutering their pets.

The expected outcome for the project was to spay and/or neuter 150 cats (75 spay/75 neuter procedures) and to spay/neuter 100 dogs (50 spay/50 neuter procedures) in order to reduce our shelter intake of community strays and unwanted animals. Additionally, we sought to increase the percentage of county residents who understand the importance of spay/neuter procedures and how to access free spay/neuter procedures through these grant funds.



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Summary of Approach:

During the first quarter, AWL staff designed a flyer in English and Spanish and posted it at the shelter, local post offices, in our newsletter, in the Shore Update, and with our local newspaper publishing company. The application was made available at our front desk, at several local vet offices and on our website. We also began mailing applications to people who could not otherwise access it, and an application was given to pet owners when their animals were picked up as strays (if unaltered). A total of 41 grant funded surgeries were completed at our onsite clinic during the 1st quarter.

During the second quarter, AWL continued to distribute information through flyers posted in targeted communities, as well as at the shelter, and in local print and social media outlets. Grant funds were expended to purchase disposable surgical and medical supplies for the animals participating in the grant program and we expanded the number of clinic days we had in order to facilitate more grant funded procedures. A total of 64 procedures were completed during the 2nd quarter.

During the third quarter, we translated more of our materials into Spanish to decrease the barriers to low-income Hispanic residents and greatly expanded our outreach to targeted communities. We identified and began reaching out to county churches with Hispanic congregations as well as to local thrift shops that have a low income clientele. We also had significant change in leadership during this quarter: leadership that took a fresh eye to how we were running our onsite clinic. Our clinic surgery rate was not keeping pace with our significantly higher adoption rate, and we were struggling to meet the surgical demands of our own animals with a twice monthly clinic. As such, we began looking for ways to increase the surgery rate for shelter animals and meet grant goals and objectives. Towards the end of this quarter, we reached out to Spay Now in Grasonville (a low cost veterinary care provider) and developed vouchers that could be used by approved grant applicants for spay/neuter services. We felt this provided for both the grant objectives and the shelter's needs. During this quarter we had a new staff member trained in grant application and approval requirements, and conducted 22 procedures.

During the fourth quarter, we continued to provide spay neuter procedures through a voucher based system with surgeries conducted at Spay Now. We also had another new staff member trained in grant application and approval requirements and conducted 16 procedures.

Accomplishments:

Despite significant organizational challenges that came up in the third quarter of the grant and persisted through its conclusion, we were successful in achieving 75% of our cat spay goal, 55% of our cat neuter goal, 42% of our dog spay and 50% of our dog neuter goals. While not the goals that were set when the grant was envisioned, each of these procedures is a success – as each altered animal can result in a reduction of 5-6 animals from shelter intake. The new leadership team, when taking over the grant responsibilities, developed a strong, new network of outreach partners to help us reach low-income and minority households. We also developed a new partnership with Spay Now, with whom we are now working to establish a feral cat spay/neuter program with an outside partner. When assessing how to fulfill the grant objectives and shelter needs, we chose to start a weekly, onsite surgical clinic run and managed by a new, young veterinarian who specializes in shelter medicine. The addition of this veterinarian and the weekly clinic has allowed us to work through our massive backlog of unaltered shelter animals. In the future, with this backlog gone, our shelter animal population at significantly lower levels, and our adoption rates up, we may be able to return to doing low income spay neuter procedures onsite, rather than sending them offsite with vouchers.

Lessons Learned:

For a young organization that is focused on animal welfare, not social services per se, determining effective ways to identify and target low-income pet owners was the first significant challenge. We had to learn a great deal about our community first, then, network in targeted areas, and figure out the best ways to provide



information and materials to reach these groups. Then, it was the challenge to help them navigate all the grant application requirements to overcome language, cultural, and technology barriers. Through the course of the grant, we feel we made a number of important inroads into the low-income community in the county – inroads that will be helpful when we begin to look at reducing community cat populations as well as continuing to provide low-cost spay neuter services. We are still working to find a bi-lingual volunteer who can help Hispanic applicants move from being interested in the program, to having been successful in having their pets altered.

A second significant and unexpected challenge came from the significantly higher pace of adoptions that occurred with new management. With recording breaking levels of cat and dog adoptions month after month in the 3rd and 4th quarters, the previous bimonthly clinic structure, where as many, if not more, outside grant funded animals were being spayed/neutered than shelter animals was simply not sustainable. We worked with all our clinic partners, and our community veterinary partners, to find a way to meet our new adoption pace and continue the mission critical work of low-income spay neuter procedures. The voucher system provided a workable solution to the problem.

The final challenge came from the changes within the organization itself. It is not uncommon for young nonprofits to weather a period such as we did, when the original founding leadership structure evolves into a more mature one. During a period of four months, we had near 100% turnover and lost all the staffers who were fluent in the grant operation. Just as we had a new Medical Coordinator up to speed on the grant, events transpired which required us to bring on a different Medical Coordinator. This need to train several new Medical Coordinators in grant operations over a three month period had an impact on the numbers of procedures which were conducted, particularly in the fourth quarter – but with the current rates of stability in our staff we're confident that in the future, we'll be able to successfully achieve grant funded objectives to the same degree that we've achieved higher shelter adoption rates.

Attachments:

- Grant Flyer English
- Grant Flyer Spanish
- Grant Application English
- Grant Application Spanish
- Post Surgery Information Spanish
- Final Tally of all Spay/Neuter Procedures
- Final Costs for all Spay/Neuter Procedures

For More Information Contact:

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